

Michelle Breton, EdD, RN
Testimony against LD 94
March 29, 2023, 9 AM

Good morning esteemed members of the committee,

I am testifying today against LD 94. I am the mother of a now 10 year old brain cancer survivor who has relied on Maine's excellent medical cannabis program for the last 6 years. When David was just 2.5 years old, he was diagnosed with a low grade brain tumor. It was good fortune that we moved to Maine to be closer to my family in June 2016, because a few months later, David relapsed and had a second craniotomy and the pathology came back malignant. Now dealing with an aggressive brain cancer, his entire medical team was on board with medical cannabis. When I asked his neurosurgeon about it, his reply was "I think it would be almost irresponsible to NOT try it." So I delved hard into the world of medical cannabis and it became my life. It was something I could do for David. We also followed all other recommended protocols. He had a third craniotomy, 37 rounds of proton radiation at Mass General, and 10 months of chemo.

The child he is today is thank to all of that. Cannabis did more for us than I could possibly describe in words. Not only was it palliative, there is good scientific evidence to show that it actually worked synergistically with his other therapies to induce tumor cell apoptosis. This is desirable programmed cell death of abnormal neurons, and it is the goal of cancer therapies. His team constantly remarked how well David navigated all his treatments. He was sleeping well, eating well (he did not lose any weight, which they said they never seen happen before) and it helped with his mood and nausea. We were not given good odds. He had an aggressive brain cancer that is very rare in children with very little data on how to treat it. He is here today and thriving. He has epilepsy, but again cannabis has been an incredible part of our treatment. We are now down to about 2 three second seizures per day. Previously, he was up to 200+. This is the power of cannabis in combination with other therapies that his doctors felt would be helpful. We tried weaning cannabis and just using meds, and he worsened greatly, so everyone thought it would be in his best interest to continue. We use both CBD and THC as well as other cannabinoids that are present in full spectrum cannabis extracts.

I have several concerns with this bill:

- 1) Qualifying conditions are not necessary. This should be left between parents and the child's healthcare provider who is knowledgeable about medical cannabis. State involvement in this will only serve to potentially reduce access to this potentially life altering and even life saving therapy. Please trust parents and knowledgeable trained healthcare providers to make this choice. Also, importantly, I notice that cancer is not on the proposed list. There is emerging evidence that cannabis can be used to help fight cancer – not just palliatively, as previously mentioned. Please see, for example, the

study at the bottom of this testimony. Furthermore, there are many treatments that a physician or other qualified healthcare practitioner may determine would be helped by cannabis with the benefits outweighing any risks – including alzheimer's insomnia, generalized anxiety, end-of-life symptoms, various neurological conditions, and many more.

- 2) Please allow healthcare providers to continue giving patients their card. This preserves privacy and allows patients and parents to feel comfortable that they are not the potential target of law enforcement stings for treating their child in concert with their medical team.
- 3) Concentrates are a mainstay of medical cannabis treatment. Eliminating concentrates essentially means eliminating the program. This is unacceptable. I am happy to answer any questions about how medical cannabis is prepared for children safely – including, and especially, the preparation of clean, tested concentrates that are then appropriately diluted. Cancer treatment, for example, requires high doses and this can only be achieved with concentrates. Please do not criminalize parents like me who were acting to protect their child with the full support of his entire medical team.
- 4) It is not necessary to change the definition of a caregiver or cardholder. These are appropriately defined currently and the program is working.
- 5) It is not necessary to separate patients by age groups, as the parents and qualified medical professional will decide the best and safest course of action based on evidence and clinical experience.
- 6) There does not seem to be any good reason to eliminate physician assistants as professionals who are able to certify and treat medical cannabis patients. These are qualified healthcare professionals who have the ability to do this work and provide a service to patients.
- 7) The patient's medical condition should not be printed on the card. This is an invasion of privacy.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Katherine A. Scott, Angus G. Dalgleish, and Wai M. Liu. **The Combination of Cannabidiol and $\Delta 9$ -Tetrahydrocannabinol Enhances the Anticancer Effects of Radiation in an Orthotopic Murine Glioma Model.** *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics*, 2014; DOI: [10.1158/1535-7163.MCT-14-0402](https://doi.org/10.1158/1535-7163.MCT-14-0402)

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